



Pahang Menteri Besar **Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob** (right) inspecting an illegal bauxite mine in **Felda Bukit Goh**, Pahang. Pic by Farizul Hafiz Awang

BAUXITE LURE: Settlers may lose their land for abusing titles, says Pahang agency

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EVERY single bauxite mine in the severely scarred Felda Bukit Goh oil palm plantation in Pahang is illegal.

Sources in the state government said the settlers, who had abused their titles and allowed illegal miners to mine their land for the mineral, had breached rules and regulations barring them from doing so without approval.

Many of the landowners are crying foul, as not only has the plantation been rendered barren, but they were also denied millions of ringgit promised to them by the miners.

This is not the only issue they have to worry about.

The severity of the problem is such that the state Land and Mines Office (PTG) is looking into invoking the National Land Code against settlers who abused their land, which has been sanctioned only for plantation and agriculture, and not mining.

Such settlers may have their land seized.

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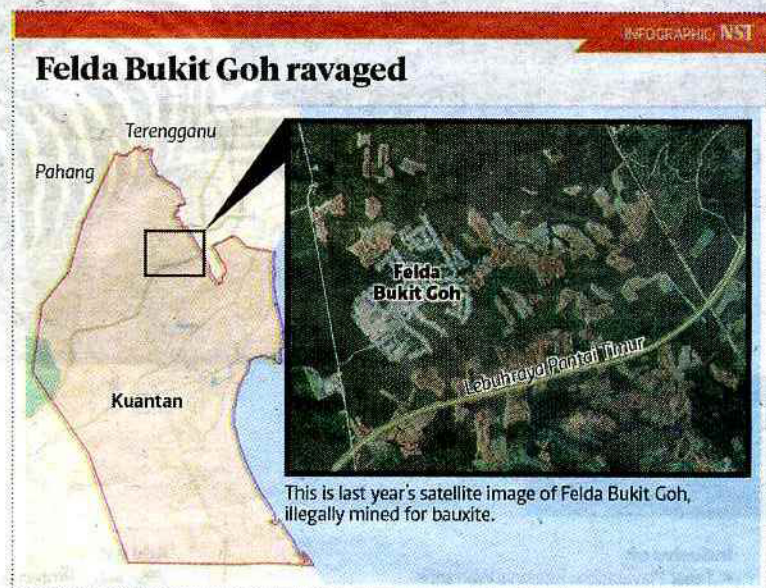
Probes Team learnt that 283ha in the Felda scheme have been mined.

This involves 70 titles, each with an average acreage of 4.5ha.

State PTG director Datuk Nazri Abu Bakar told the team that the office had acted only against the owners of heavy machines found at the illegal mines, as well as lorry operators arrested during operations.

"The masterminds, including those who abuse the law to facilitate illegal mining, normally escape action... including by staying under the radar.

"In the past, we faced a lot of problems linking those behind the excavators and lorry drivers to the main culprits because in this illegal business, transactions are done on a



cash-only basis, hence, there are problems when it comes to forensic evidence or establishing a paper trail.

"To better control illegal mining, we will look into holding landowners accountable for violating the terms of their land agreements, and invoking Section 130 of the National Land Code, which grants us the power to seize their land," he said, adding that the office hoped to prevent the abuse of the system with the enforcement of the code.

Nazri said previously, PTG had issued warning letters, as provisioned

under the Mineral Enactment 2001, to Felda Bukit Goh settlers who extracted bauxite.

He said the office would not hold back when enforcing the law, including the enactment, which could see those found guilty being fined up to RM500,000 or sentenced to a maximum of 10 years' jail, or both.

"We put in a lot of consideration, as we think about the settlers' livelihood, including the many who are in their twilight years.

"We know that many have been cheated... that's why we did not pursue the matter legally, as we feel that

we have to factor in these considerations and the consequences for the settlers."

He said back then, PTG had carried out operations lasting two months to stop the proliferation of illegal mines at the settlement.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob, in an exclusive interview with the NST recently, said the state authority had failed to arrest even a single illegal miner, as the miners escaped the dragnet each time raids were carried out.

Last year, the settlers, upon realising that they had been cheated by the miners, had asked that the state government intervene.

Adnan had told the settlers that the state government was unable to press charges against the miners, with whom they had inked deals.

Nazri, who was present during the interview, said regarding legal miners, the Minerals and Geoscience Department (JMG) should ensure that their mining activities complied with the Operational Mining Scheme (OMS).

"PTG issues the mining licence to operate, but miners have to get approval from JMG, which issues the OMS.

"The scheme is enforced by the department."

It is understood that the state government might consider a scheme to salvage the settlers' illegally mined land, so that they do not lose it all.